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ress in this country and throughout this continent. The destruction of the state library at Albany, it seems to me, is much more than a local loss, or a national loss. It is, in every sense, an international calamity. As president of a Canadian library association, and as a member of the American library association, it gives me very special pleasure to second this resolution.

The CHAIRMAN: Anything further to be said? If not, as many as are in favor of the resolution as presented by Mr. Utley, and seconded by Mr. Ripley and Mr. Burpee, will manifest it in the usual manner of to-day, by rising.

(The entire assemblage rose to their feet and the motion was passed unanimously.)

The CHAIRMAN: We trust that the Secretary will transmit this by lettergram to Mr. Wyer to-night. I am going to read a letter from him which he prepared in anticipation of not being able to be here and not as an answer to the resolution which has just been adopted.

Albany, N. Y., May 13, 1911.  
Greetings to the A. L. A.

There is a possibility that I may not be able to reach Pasadena. Aside from the strenuous conditions immediately resulting from the destruction of the State Library, important pending legislation is likely to reach a stage at any day that will make it impossible to be so far away or so long absent from Albany.

No one who has been chosen president of the American Library Association willingly foregoes the honor and pleasant privilege of presiding over your annual conference. Nothing short of a great calamity such as that melancholy one, the stress of which threatens to detain me, would be counted a sufficient excuse for absence. Should it be imperative for me to remain at home, I can only hope that my plea of superior official duty will seem as adequate and convincing to you as it does to your president.

For six weeks he has confidently planned to be with you, and has steadily hugged the precarious hope that he might cross the continent to this meeting, in the face of the knowledge that at the last moment, or at almost any moment, events might so shape themselves as to make it wholly out of the question.

If finally he does not come, it will be only because it is quite clear that he has no right to be anywhere else than in Albany at this time—that there is too much now at

stake, and that no reasonable conception of duty will warrant any other course. In this event the opportunity will be presented to utilize the corps of ex-presidents, those ornamental by-products of our organization. To their kind and experienced offices the conduct of the general sessions of the Association may confidently be entrusted, with the unique and attractive element of variety which has certainly much to commend it when contrasted with the monotony accruing to a series of meetings all conducted by the same person.

Should it be necessary to read these sentences, they are offered with the keenest expressions of regret, a regret which you can not feel in equal measure, but with every confidence that beautiful and hospitable Southern California, the five hundred enthusiastic librarians of the Golden State and the representative attendance now assured from all parts of the country will all conspire to bring about a thoroughly memorable meeting.

J. I. WYER, JR.

The CHAIRMAN: President Wyer's address will now be read by Mr. W. C. LANE, ex-president of the American library association and librarian of Harvard university, whom I have the pleasure of presenting to you.

Mr. LANE: You understand, of course, the address I am about to read is Mr. Wyer's address, and not mine. I am simply a voice, and nothing more. The subject of the address is

#### WHAT THE COMMUNITY OWES THE LIBRARY

For fifty years the free public library has been "finding itself"; has been trying to discover its precise point of attachment in a complex social order; has been determining and evolving its proper functions and seeking to fix the scope of its activities. During this experimental period there have been some excesses to curb, some fungous growths to lop off, and some mistaken policies to revise. These have been, however, but the natural marks of quick growth. They have revealed no fundamental malady or fault. All in all the notion of what a public library shall be and do has become steadily clearer and more definite. Through work preeminently characterized by earnestness and devotion

it has commended itself to the people, and its place in our intellectual life as an institution and not as an appurtenance seems pretty securely fixed. What the library owes the community has been often discussed, what the library can do for the community is being abundantly demonstrated every day in every corner of the land and will be demonstrated with more and more effectiveness each year. It is highly becoming that the library should thus first have considered its own debt and duties before inquiring too straitly into those of the public which it serves.

The obligations are not all on one side, however. There are some things which the community owes the library, certain things which the community can do for the library which it can not do for itself and which can be done for it only by the organized local government or by its influential individual members. Fundamentally every community owes it to itself to *have* a library. This is a statement which in the past it has been far more necessary to support by argument than now in the day of its general acceptance. It is perhaps not too much to say that the burden of proof has somewhat shifted and now tends to rest upon the state, city, county or village which neglects suitable library provision for its people. Once a library is started, however, and by the very act of starting, obligations are assumed which are less generally and clearly recognized than would be well.

Certain fundamental statutory provisions touching the organization and control of the library should be so shaped as to emphasize by law, and so executed as to establish by precedent and tradition, the fact that partisan politics and personal self-seeking have no place in the governing board of a library. No mere phrase in charter or statute will achieve this. No single mode of appointment holds sovereign virtue sufficient to insure the right sort of trustees. They will result only from the rooting and acceptance of a firm conviction that the library and school concern, not the externals of life—fire, water, police, roads and bridges—but

the everlasting things of the spirit, the foundations of citizenship and character, and that on no account whatsoever shall their government be intrusted to that base metal which is welded into the links, wheels and shafts of a political machine. The ideal trustee is the active, clear-headed man of affairs, of large acquaintance with the city's business and its men of influence, who, if he does not believe thoroughly in the library, is open-minded and wholly free from pledge or prejudice, who knows or is willing to learn enough of its work to recognize its expert and specialized character, and so to avoid the melancholy confusion of legislative and executive functions which sometimes exists between trustees and staff. Such an appointive tradition and practice as is here urged is happily already widely prevalent in this country and yearly becomes stronger and is more consistently followed.

The community owes the library a competent staff as well as the right sort of trustees. It may be objected that the community has nothing to say about the personnel of the library staff. Indeed! Let a vacancy occur and every trustee will testify that numerous, insistent and very earnest citizens will instantly appear to urge certain candidacies on every ground except that of fitness as shown by temperament, training or experience. Well-meaning and high-minded trustees are constantly importuned, and too often consent, to favor a local candidate or one who needs the money and will work for very little, or somebody's sister, cousin or aunt, upon grounds wholly irrelevant and immaterial. Some communities which maintain public libraries and seem to take a sort of pride in them, have but the faintest conception of the splendid work which such institutions can do in the hands of a carefully chosen staff of trained and experienced people who are filled with the spirit of service. What can be hoped from a library administration which tacitly assumes either that a candidate's need is a sufficient measure of ability or that all the talent needed to manage a library in the best way

surely exists under the local vine and fig tree. This insistence on the mere accident of residence is one of the chief contentions of the merit system of civil service which librarians seem to be practically unanimous in condemning as thoroughly unsatisfactory for recruiting the staff in municipal public libraries.

The community owes the library a *reasonable* financial support. Reasonable is here a relative term. It may be defined roughly as the amount, not extravagantly disproportioned to the total city budget, which a thoroughly competent librarian can spend wisely. Perhaps fifty cents per capita is not unreasonable though it is likely that no American city yet spends so much. In fixing the amount of the library budget, the community (that is, the press, the city council, sometimes even the library board) often unjustly compares the total library expenditure of its city with others of about the same size, unjustly—because the bare statistics are the only factors that can really be compared and they tell no vital part of the tale. The real factors are the energy, interest and wisdom of the library board, the competence of the librarian and the staff, the excellence of the library buildings and equipment, and to a lesser extent the character and temper of the people. The people of many cities cheerfully pay a library tax twice that of other cities of equal size and would be instant to oppose a reduction, because the policy and conduct of the library have been wise and able and have won for it a cordial and tacit approval.

Yet the pet art of the demagogue bawling economy is to marshal meaningless figures intended to show that a large expenditure necessarily spells waste, when the truth is likelier to be that an unusually large appropriation shows an efficient administration which has been given the money because it has proved that it knows how to spend it wisely. The real waste is far oftener found in the very budget cited by the demagogue or the partisan paper to prove economy—a budget disproportionately small when compared with the size of the city, because an inert,

incompetent administration has never won the confidence of the powers behind the purse. It is not just to a library or to any other municipal enterprise to start it and then starve it to the accompaniment of a running criticism of its inefficiency. Library and school finances sometimes suffer temporarily because of maximum tax levy provision in state laws and in city charters. These fiscal safeguards probably originated when tax-supported schools and libraries were dubious innovations, worth a trial perhaps, but innovations which must be carefully hedged about till their usefulness was proved. Now their usefulness is fully proved. No one seriously questions the propriety, the desirability nor the civic and social necessity of publicly supported and administered schools and libraries. The day is long past when statutory limitations on expenditures for education are regarded seriously. The history of library legislation shows that provisions limiting the tax levy to one-half a mill, one mill, two mills, or to any stated sum, are being constantly repealed or extended to reflect the growing willingness of the American people to invest in education and to emphasize their approval of the results which are being achieved. Why then, is there further need for such provisions at all? They are now purposeless hindrances set in the path of social and educational progress—they may add zest to the race but they assuredly delay arrival at the goal. The state and municipal fiscal machinery affords enough checks to extravagant appropriating without arbitrary and antiquated provisions in the organic and statute law. There is no recognized tax rate, expressed in mills, which by general agreement represents a fair, generous or proper appropriation for public library purposes. There never can be such a rate. Assessed valuations vary widely among the states. The rate in one state will produce twice as much money on the same valuation as in another. And worse than all—that imitation in legislation which has modeled so many state constitutions on that of Ohio, tends to perpetuate in library laws and city charters with too little regard for differing condi-

tions, the provisions which some other city or state has found salutary.

The community owes the library a tasteful, substantial, reasonably adequate building, the interior planned by library people for library purposes and the whole set upon a central site. Some of the most melancholy chapters in municipal library annals treat of bitter personal or sectional squabbles over where the library shall be located, out of what it shall be built, and the library buildings are many which were planned and erected before it became the fashion to let librarians have even as little to say about the interior as they now may. The library may not be housed in the city hall, a school house, in residence houses left as legacies, or in any building not primarily made for library purposes without serious administrative waste and loss of efficiency, and, more important still, without robbing the library and its work of the dignity and impressiveness which belong to it.

The entire community owes the public library open-mindedness, patience and a better understanding of its work and needs. This is especially true of those persons and institutions that are potent in civic affairs and in the making of public opinion—the press, public men, the pulpit, the chamber of commerce, etc. The city council should never consider the library budget as the measure of any party—it is above party—nor regard the library staff as offering even indirect opportunities for patronage. The press should be as ready to commend as to criticize and both praise and blame should be discriminating and informed. Public men and influential citizens should be ready to say a good word for the library whenever it is deserved and equally ready to lend a hand and render it a service when help is necessary, for a library, like most public institutions, will have its ups and downs, depending usually upon the personality and power of the librarian and the most interested and influential men on its board.

Once the community has decided to have a library its trustees and staff properly may assume that it wants the best possible

library of size and scope commensurate with local conditions. This will require a home, books, competent help, in a word money. It will require more money than another community of equal size which is content with a library only half as good as it can be made. Out of this proper assumption, logically arise the obligations of the community to the library which have just been dwelt upon. These obligations depend upon and interact with those which the library owes to the community. Neither library nor community can furnish more than one of the oars by which the boat must be moved forward. A competent library board and staff without enough money is almost an unthinkable proposition for such a board and staff assuredly will get money. A good building and more money than the library administration can spend wisely is a commoner condition. There are more libraries that are not returning to the community in service full value for the money spent than libraries that are without money for wise and really necessary development.

In this somewhat formidable catalog of what the community owes the library, it must be ever in mind, despite the commercial sound of the phrase, that the community and the library do not occupy towards each other the usual positions of parties to a commercial contract where each is seeking his own gain and is willing to secure it at the expense of the other. In a business contract the privileges and emoluments ceded and alienated by each party are parted with absolutely for some real or supposed advantage ceded and received in return. The reciprocal obligations recognized between the library and the community, however, are but mutual privileges arranged between members of the same social family. No whit of good, no tithe of advantage can be lost to the larger community which includes both the library and its public, because of the fullest performance of their obligations by both parties. The resulting benefits are still "all in the family." There is, therefore, no excuse between library and community for that attitude of suspicion or distrust

which sometimes marks the strict enforcement of business contracts. There should be, there *must* be the frankest understanding, the heartiest cooperation arising from the knowledge that whatever benefits either library or community benefits both.

The CHAIRMAN: In introducing the next speaker I can do no better than to use a quotation from President Wyer's letter of instruction: "Mr. Wright is vouched for by Mr. P. B. Wright, no relation, by the way, who has promised for him an interesting, vigorous and stimulating address." Mr. WILLARD HUNTINGTON WRIGHT, literary editor of the Los Angeles Times, will speak to us on the subject

### IS LIBRARY CENSORSHIP DESIRABLE?

Mr. Wright said in part:

Censorship unfortunately is not confined to public libraries, the most objectionable forms being found outside these institutions. Furthermore the problem of censorship is not so large an issue in libraries as the outsider supposes. Subterraneanly, however, it influences the board's selection of books. Though actively no intolerance may be shown, the principle is ever present. Censorship in libraries is an offshoot of the general practice of censoring letters, and censorship in general includes library censorship in particular, as the principle is the same.

Censorship has had a long and inglorious career, dating from the days of early Rome to the present. Primarily it grew out of a sense of racial preservation; was originally in the hands of the church; and to-day is composed largely of that Puritan prejudice which is a survival of mediæval superstition. Modern censorship is founded largely on the assumption that the sinner is the man of gaiety and impulse, and that the path of virtue is a highway of solemn reason, trodden only by serious minded folk. As a result stupidity and solemnity have been considered by censors as synonymous with morality.

The question of censorship hinges largely on the question of morality, and morality depends upon nationality, civilization and

period of development. What is strictly proper and moral in the heart of Africa would not be acceptable to the standards set by Americans of the present age, and consequently many things would pass censorship there, which would be questioned here. Strictly the only proper literary censorship is that exercised over wildly anarchistic philippics, diatribes against the government or hortatory tracts advocating lawlessness. The expurgation of memoirs, or the exclusion of erotic novels from libraries are not acts of true moral censorship, but are really only the practical application of Puritan prejudices.

In literary censorship the term "immoral" is often confounded with "sexual," and in consequence the works of Boccaccio, Dumas *filis*, Pinero and Sudermann are often stamped as immoral when the murdering rascals of Hawthorne, Conrad and Conan Doyle, fully as immoral, pass muster at the library.

In all these instances the rascally and erotic heroes and heroines are made to reap their just deserts and as soon as this is accomplished, the book, philosophically speaking, becomes moral. Some, however, will argue that the moral lesson is a hypocritical subterfuge and that the charm of the book lies not in the moral dicta, but in the glamour of the crime. However this may be, it is an undeniable fact that books of ethical lectures and volumes of homiletics have never yet been tabulated among the best sellers; that it is a psychological fact that ethics and morality appeal to us not through reason but through the emotions, and that the more attractively clothed the moral precepts are, the more apt we are to read them.

Morality in its last analysis means but one thing—custom. The assertion that it means aught else places the ban of bigotry—or at least of incorrectness—on the person who makes it. Morality is the code of manners adopted by a people for its racial preservation. These manners are governed entirely by conditions. Thus as conditions have changed morals have changed; and as conditions are different in different countries, so are morals different in differ-